

U.S. Air-Mapped Russia Before U2s, Ex-Spy Says

STATINTL

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN
Star Staff Writer

A Swedish military officer who spied for both the United States and Russia has testified that American aircraft and balloons flew illegally over territory of the Soviet Union for at least 10 years before the U2 spy plane incident in 1960.

Col. Stig Eric Constans Wennerstroem, who said he practiced his espionage trade in both Moscow and Washington, told Swedish investigators earlier this year about his uncanny ability to ferret out information, first for the Americans and then for the Russians.

He was convicted by a Swedish court of gross espionage and sentenced June 12 to life imprisonment. He had confessed to spying for the United States, briefly working as a double agent, and then spying for Russia from 1951 until his arrest June 20, 1963.

His testimony was translated into English and made public last night by the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.

The 57-year-old officer said the first illegal flights were undertaken in 1950 by the RB36, "a very large six-engine plane that flew at what was for that period an exceptionally high altitude."

The RB36 flights continued until Soviet air defenses endangered their operations, he said. Later, "special balloons were built that ascended to great heights," he said. These balloons were sent by air currents across the Soviet Union from west to east.

"The balloons were equipped with cameras and took photographs automatically during their flights," he said.

U2 Replaced Balloons

The balloons were replaced by the U2 planes. The U2's were discontinued after Francis Gary Powers' ill-fated flight in May 1960.

Wennerstroem was the Swedish air attache in Moscow from 1949 until 1952. From April 1952 to May 1957 he was air attache in Washington. Later, he served in Stockholm until his arrest.

"Sympathetic" to NATO, he said he did various jobs for the U.S. Embassy while in Moscow. Because he was freer to travel

around Russia, he reported on new Soviet aircraft and made observations of secret Soviet test flights, he testified.

Probably his most unusual job was on a trip to the Ukraine to find out whether the roofs in a certain village were thatched or of sheet metal.

"The origin of this investigation had to do with American bombsights," he said. "The particular bombsight in question was constructed so that the plane could be navigated at night and flying over or in fog with the help of radar. . . . A village with sheet metal roofs would show up on the screen and the other would not."

Soon after his arrival in Moscow, he said he began doing jobs for the Soviet intelligence, becoming in effect a "double agent." His dual role was finally discovered by the Russians due to carelessness by the U.S. Embassy, which transmitted his name in a code that was cracked by the Russians.

When Soviet agents confronted him with this evidence, in a villa outside Moscow, his first reaction was "unheard-of bitterness against the Americans for not being able to protect themselves better," and fear that the Russians "were prepared to liquidate me with a shot in the nape of the neck or something similar."

No Retaliation

But, to his relief, "there was not a single word from the Soviets of reproach or bad humor about their having been misled," he said.

Although he continued to maintain close contact with U.S.

intelligence officers, from that time on he was working only for the Russians, he said.

In 1952, he was assigned to Washington, where his main assignment was to gather material on technical developments in the United States, which was to a certain extent similar to his duties as Swedish air attache.

At defense industries, he would indicate that Sweden was interested in purchasing a certain product. He would therefore experience little difficulty in getting detailed plans. He rarely was asked if he was authorized to see secret material, but if he was, he said yes.

Once the literature was obtained, Wennerstroem would put it on microfilm and slip it to Soviet contacts — almost always the air attache in the Russian embassy — in a number of different ways. Often the microfilm would be transferred during a handshake at diplomatic receptions, but there were many other meeting places, indoors and outdoors.

Paid \$750 a Month

Wennerstroem said he received about \$750 a month from the Russians during his five years in Washington. Much of that was used for expenses, but he was able to draw larger sums later after his return to Sweden. He said he only received expenses for his work for the Americans.

As a spy, he found it useful in Washington to cultivate the wives of important contacts.

"Women have a much greater influence over the men than we realize," he said. "If a closer

contact with somebody is desired and if the spouse of the party concerned could be interested in the meeting, she would be a driving factor to a great extent."

Wennerstroem said that during the 1950s, the Soviet government was very concerned about the balance of power, which obviously favored the United States. This nervousness led the Russians to expect an attack at any time, and on one occasion he was asked to check a report from Moscow that a surprise attack was being readied.

"I expected that if something was taking place of such great importance . . . there would be hectic activity in the Pentagon," he said.

"At that time I had a great number of contacts in the Pentagon whom I knew very well . . .

"I made this round and found that there was no difficulty to get in to talk to them . . . Thus the over-all impression was such that it was impossible that anything was underway since nobody was in a particular rush . . . I reported that, according to my judgment, the reports were definitely wrong."